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VERSE FOR LITTLE FOLKS  
AND OTHERS

EUGENE SECOR



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# Verse for Little Folks and Others

By

Eugene Secor



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By Alson Secor

DEDICATED TO THE LOVERS  
OF NATURE

Art Work by  
Egbert Norman Clark

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## Prosy Remarks About the Author

It is for the purpose of putting some of my father's nature verse into a form in which they may be better preserved that I assemble them in this little volume. Many have appeared in different publications, and some are recorded here for the first time.

For half a century he has lived in the one spot among the trees, the flowers, the bees and squirrels. This home bears the appropriate name of "The Shelter," for it is indeed a shelter for every harmless living thing, as well as for his many friends who chance that way.

Here in the bosom of Nature, the Muse has touched the chords of his poetic soul and many are the rhymes that have emanated from "The Shelter."

ALSON SECOR

Des Moines, Ia., Dec. 1911

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## The Wood Thrush

The yellow sun is sinking low,  
Tingeing the sky with mellow glow.  
I hear a restful vesper hymn  
Poured from a high and hidden limb.

The mate is brooding near away,  
Where, through the weary, fretting  
day,  
She, like a prophetess, doth see  
Winged music in that nesting-tree.

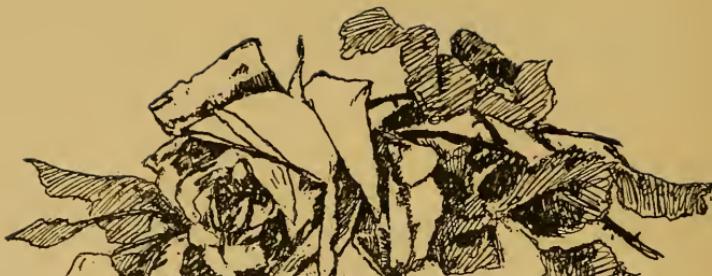
Who would not wait in patience long  
And ply his task, if such a song,  
Sung by the one he loved the best  
Could cheer him in his daily quest?

That matchless strain, almost divine,  
More sweetly sounds at day's decline,  
When weary Nature asks surcease  
From toil and care and prays for peace.

Thy speckled vest and tawny coat  
Cover a tuneful, happy throat.  
All day thy cadenced music flows,  
But richer, sweeter at its close.

As evening comes to me may I  
Sing songs of hope to passers by—  
Sing till the deepening shadows fall  
To Him who broodeth over all.





### Mister Redhead

See the woodpecker peck that old tree!  
What d'you think he is trying to do?  
Digs a hole with his bill, don't you  
see?—  
That's his auger and small chisel, too.  
R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap at it early and  
late,  
First a breakfast of worms, then a  
house for his mate.

I should think it would make his head  
ache—  
Or don't birds ever have such mean  
things?  
"They don't eat so much candy and  
cake,  
And feel sick when the morning bell  
rings?"  
R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap, he is always at  
work,  
And the worms better "git" if they  
don't like his dirk.

What a lovely white shirt front he  
shows,  
And his coat is as black as a crow,

But his head is as red as a rose—  
Red as blood that the butcher makes  
flow.  
R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap, like a boy with  
a drum,  
For he never gets tired till the even-  
ing has come.

'Way up high where an old rotten  
limb  
Has been torn by the wind from a tree  
There's the cunningest hole made by  
him,  
And a little red head peeps at me.  
R-rap-a-tap, r-rap-a-tap, hear the mate  
after grubs!  
While one watches the nest t'other just  
rub-a-dubs.

How I wish I could live in that way,  
In a hole away up in a tree,  
I could go where I please in the day,  
And at night how the wind would rock  
me!  
And I'd rub-a-dub-dub, and I'd rap-a-  
tap-tap  
Every morning before you had finished  
your nap.





## Robin Redbreast

A pair of robins built their nest  
Beside our cottage door,  
Bro't sticks and straws with little rest,  
And with much labor wove and press'd  
The shapeless mass to walls and  
floor  
To hold the frail eggs, four.

Not such fine artists, nor so brave,  
As is the oriole,  
Who hangs her well-built nest to wave,  
Fearless, though angry tempests rave,  
But more substantial stays control  
The robin's scraggy roll.

A friendly fork of sheltering tree  
Is their supreme delight,  
They feel that here in some degree  
Is much desired security,  
For dawning life is helpless, quite,  
And needs maternal sight.

The mother brooded while he sang  
His cheeriest notes to her—

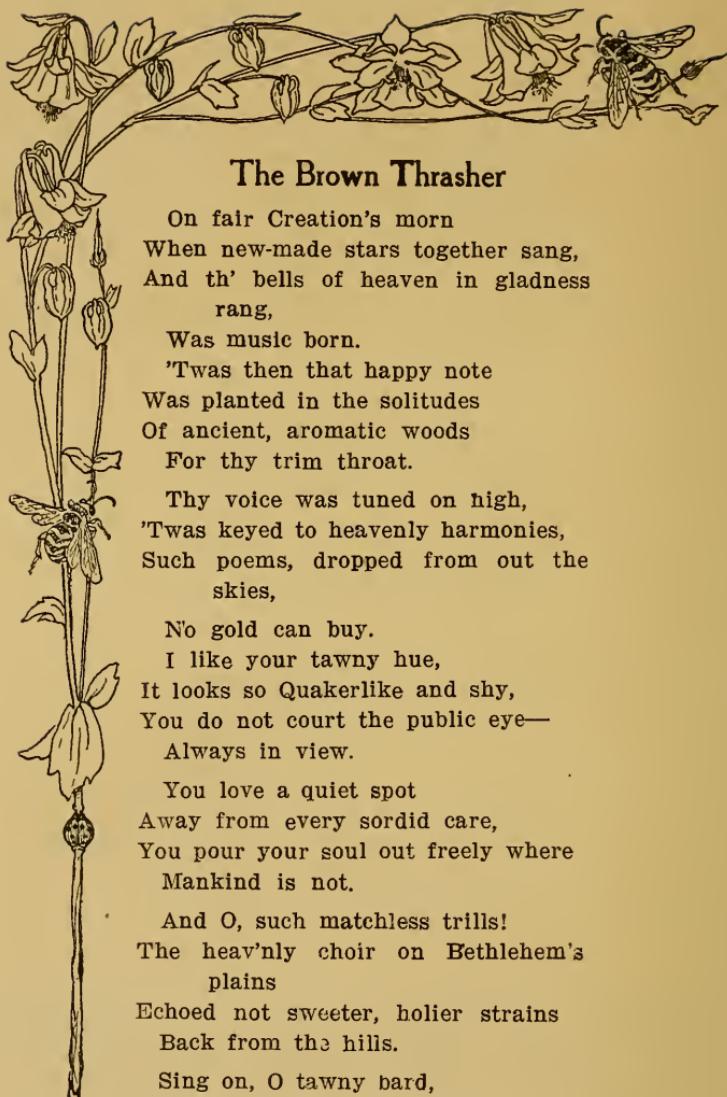
The morning with his clarion rang,  
A strong, encouraging harangue.  
His voice was heard from some tall  
fir  
Before men were astir.

A miracle was wrought one day,  
Four open mouths were seen,  
And then how diligent were they  
The yard and garden to survey!  
Many a fat worm did they glean  
From out the meadow green.

Four hungry squabs to satisfy,  
Four growing appetites,  
Four helpless babes 'tween earth and  
sky  
That must be fed and taught to fly,  
Defended from whatever frights  
And nestled warmly nights.

What lesson may I learn from you,  
Patient and faithful pair?  
*Learn to be diligent and true,*  
*Be up and brush the morning dew,*  
*Of life's hard duties take your share,*  
*There's blessing oft in care.*





## The Brown Thrasher

On fair Creation's morn  
When new-made stars together sang,  
And th' bells of heaven in gladness  
rang,

Was music born.

'Twas then that happy note  
Was planted in the solitudes  
Of ancient, aromatic woods  
For thy trim throat.

Thy voice was tuned on high,  
'Twas keyed to heavenly harmonies,  
Such poems, dropped from out the  
skies,

No gold can buy.

I like your tawny hue,  
It looks so Quakerlike and shy,  
You do not court the public eye—  
Always in view.

You love a quiet spot  
Away from every sordid care,  
You pour your soul out freely where  
Mankind is not.

And O, such matchless trills!  
The heav'ly choir on Bethlehem's  
plains  
Echoed not sweeter, holier strains  
Back from the hills.

Sing on, O tawny bard,  
Teach me the secret of thy art,  
Teach me to reach a brother's heart  
Without reward.



## Nesting-Time

Two robins chatted in a tree  
One ruddy April morning.  
She talked of where the nest should  
be,  
Examined every limb, but he  
Just sang, all labor scorning.  
  
She carried sticks and straws, while  
he  
Sat on a limb above her  
Splitting his throat in tuneful glee,  
Watching her build in the apple-tree,  
He playing lazy lover.  
  
He thinks he's nothing else to do,  
While Mrs. Redbreast's working,  
But whistle loud the whole day  
through,  
And I don't think that's fair, do you?  
It seems to me like shirking.  
  
But maybe she is satisfied  
If only he will linger  
To cheer his newly-wedded bride  
Whose wifely duties are her pride,  
Since she is not a singer.



## De Li'l Ol' Owl

De li'l ol' owl in de awchud say,  
W'en de baby stahs come out to play,  
    He say "Who-who! Who-who!"  
An' I talk back to him dis way;  
    I say, Who-who am you?  
De li'l ol' owl up in de tree  
He blink he eye an' say to me  
He just woke up an' he can't see,  
    An' so he ax "Who-who?"  
De li'l ol' owl he sleep all day,  
An' jus' at da'k wake up an' say  
    "Who-who! who-who! who-who!"  
He want to scare de folks away,  
An' den de mice 'll come an' play,  
He cotch 'em quick an' nevah say  
    To dem, "Who-who! Who-who!"  
De li'l ol' owl he woll he eyes  
An' twy to make you t'ink he wise,  
    An wen he say "Who-who,"  
You say he know a whole lot mo'  
If he unlock his ol' mouf-do',  
But he keep wise jes as befo',  
    An say "Who-who! who-who!"  
I 'spec' dat owl he got a wife,  
Dat gad about an' spile his life,  
    An so he ax "Who-who?"  
He like to know who am de chap  
W'at coax her off w'en he done nap,  
If he jes cotch her in his lap  
Dah'd be de bigges' kind o' scrap—  
    Dat wy he say "Who-who?"

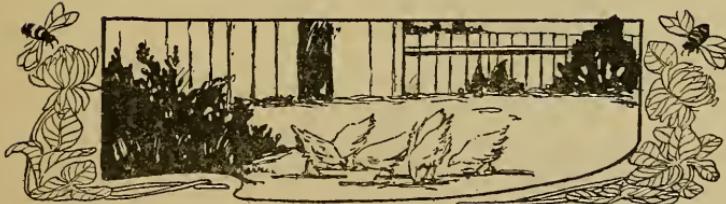


## The First Robin

The larch's topmost twig is bent—  
    A cradle lent  
To aid his musical intent—  
    And lusty is his song.  
Though crisp the lucent air, the note  
From out his throat  
Is for despair an antidote,  
    Though winter's tarried long.

Brave prophet of a better day,  
    I love thy lay,  
Thou see'st the greenery of May  
    While yet the trees are bare.  
Thy hope inspires my heart to sing,  
Gives faith sure wing,  
Because thy prophecy of spring  
    Rebukes the chilly air.

Thou art the vanguard of a host  
    Who'll charge the ghost  
Of Winter with a song almost  
    Before his soul has passed.  
Now, if he flings his darts at me  
I'll think of thee  
And all thy comrades soon to be,  
    And victory forecast.





### The Bobtail Rooster

Old Plymouth Rock has lost his tail  
And doesn't care to find it,  
So long as all the hens are true  
He never seems to mind it;  
They like his voice the best of all  
And never look behind it.

The bobtail rooster has twelve wives  
A-tagging him around,  
They run with haste when he begins  
To scratch upon the ground.  
He makes the simple hens believe  
Some choice bit he has found.

And when he does unearth a worm  
He wants the world to know it,  
He loudly calls his harem round,  
Boasting the while, to show it,  
But just as they come up to eat  
Himself proceeds to stow it.

And thus he fools his dozen wives  
A hundred times a day,  
They hang upon his idle words  
Because he knows the way

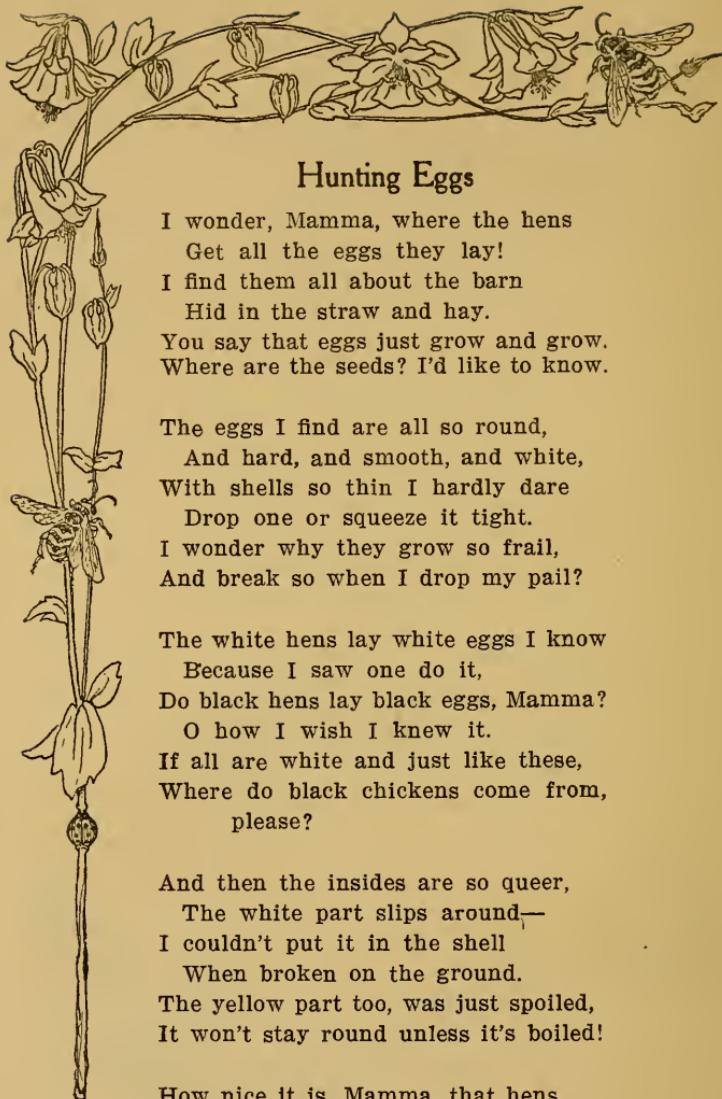
To play the lover, and to talk  
And little nothings say.

The bobtail rooster knows a lot  
That I would like to know;  
I wonder how he tells the time  
Without a clock to show.  
And wakes up in the darkest night  
At certain times to crow?

The bobtail rooster from the fence  
Proclaims the weather fair,  
But on the ground he's very sure  
That rain is in the air;  
If from the doorstep he shall crow,  
For company prepare.

But Mr. Bobtail little knows  
What soon may be his fate  
When visitors that he foretells  
Turn in the open gate.  
Unless he hides beneath the barn  
He'll grace the dinner-plate.





## Hunting Eggs

I wonder, Mamma, where the hens  
Get all the eggs they lay!  
I find them all about the barn  
Hid in the straw and hay.  
You say that eggs just grow and grow.  
Where are the seeds? I'd like to know.

The eggs I find are all so round,  
And hard, and smooth, and white,  
With shells so thin I hardly dare  
Drop one or squeeze it tight.  
I wonder why they grow so frail,  
And break so when I drop my pail?

The white hens lay white eggs I know  
Because I saw one do it,  
Do black hens lay black eggs, Mamma?  
O how I wish I knew it.  
If all are white and just like these,  
Where do black chickens come from,  
please?

And then the insides are so queer,  
The white part slips around—  
I couldn't put it in the shell  
When broken on the ground.  
The yellow part too, was just spoiled,  
It won't stay round unless it's boiled!

How nice it is, Mamma, that hens  
Lay painted eggs for me  
On Easter Sunday every year—

Just what I love to see.  
They're awful pretty, but *I aint*  
*Been feeding them a bit of paint!*

I think I'd like to have a hen  
When I'm a little older.  
Would she give me three eggs a day  
If I went out and told her?  
You say she never lays but one?  
Then she must cackle just for fun!

You say she's happiest when she  
works?  
Well, I believe that's so,  
For when you let me help keep house  
I'm happier, I know.  
I'm going to be like hens that lay,  
And do a little every day.





## The Pumpkin-Seed Calf

A farmer bought a cream machine,  
A wonderful invention  
To skim new milk with gasoline  
And beat the Dame's intention.  
He fixed it up out in the barn  
With everything so handy—  
"That's just a beautiful consarn,"  
Quoth the farmer's wife, Mirandy.

The thing extracted all the fat  
And left the milk so blue  
It wouldn't tempt a hungry cat  
Or anything that knew.  
He fed it to a silly calf  
That never knew a mother,  
A pailful of the stuff 'twould quaff  
And then bawl for another.

The farmer wondered why that calf  
Looked like a pumpkin-seed  
When it was fed six quarts an' a half  
Of warm milk at a feed.  
But he was slow to learn the fact  
Of a needed balanced ration—

That when some factors we extract  
There must be compensation.

And I have wondered oft myself  
If that's why we don't grow;  
We starve our souls in th' greed for  
pelf,  
Anxious to make a show.  
We need a balanced mental food  
To round out every part—  
The oil of love and th' grace of God  
To stimulate the heart.





### The White-Face Colt

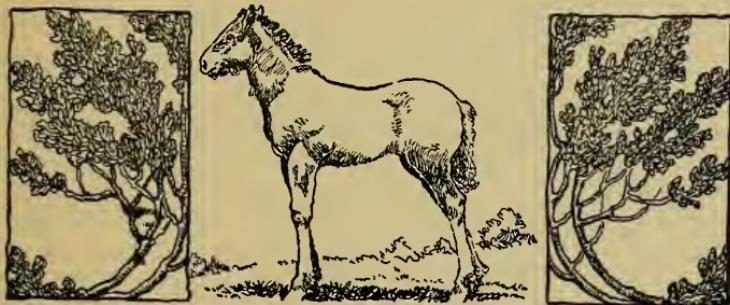
The milk-white mare is coming,  
A-coming to the barn  
From out the river pasture  
To get a bit of corn;  
And by her side is running  
The cutest baby horse,  
His crooked legs a-wabbling,  
Bound to keep up, of course.

This colt is yellow, faded—  
All but his face, that's white.  
I never saw a *little* young one  
All white, did you? Honor bright!  
My grandpa says white horses  
Are quite a common thing.  
But baby colts that color  
Are scarce as swans that sing.

I've heard him talk 'bout London,  
And a bridge so very long  
That every single minute .  
White horses 're in the throng.  
But if all colts are colored  
I would so like to know

Where all the white *old* horses  
Get coats that look like snow.

If horses, like some people,  
Turn white when they grow old,  
Will one that's black be younger?  
Pa says, "Yes, when he's sold."  
But if this white-face colty  
Turns all white, I don't care,  
I love him like a brother,  
And we'll keep him, so there!





## The Mooly Cow

We have the funniest looking cow  
You ever saw, I guess,  
She has no horns upon her brow  
Where horns should grow, unless  
Cows never care for dress.

But Papa says they never grow'd,  
I'm glad of that, ain't you?  
For if I met her on the road  
With horns, and she said "moo,"  
I don't know what I'd do.

When Papa goes at night to milk  
I always want to go;  
I like to feel her coat of silk  
And say, "So, bossy, so!"  
And see the white stream flow.

And then I hold my little cup  
And Papa fills it full,  
And after I have drank it up  
I watch him pull and pull  
Until the pail is full.

When I grow up to be a man  
I'll have a mooly cow,  
I'll feed her lots of corn and bran  
And clover from the mow,  
Like Papa's doing now.





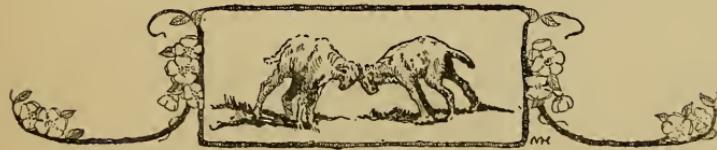
## Baby Sheep

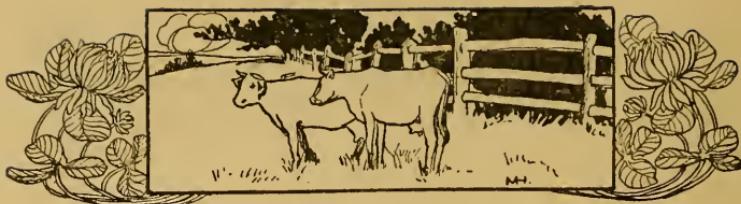
You ought to see our little lambs,  
'Bout one day old, or maybe two,  
They wabble just like babies do  
When they begin to walk alone,  
And when their mas—pa says they're  
dams—  
Call, how they run, each to its  
own.

If such a lamb tagged Mary round  
I do not wonder children smiled,  
For such a thing would set us wild  
At our school house, then teacher'd  
pound  
The desk and say that baby sheep  
Should stay at home to eat and  
sleep.

One mamma sheep had two this spring,  
With crooked legs and wiggly tails,  
They'd follow her along the trails  
And knew her voice from all the  
rest.

If I could choose from everything  
I think I'd like twin lambs the  
best.





## When the Cows Come Home

Up the lane the cows are coming,  
Judith, red and large and gentle;  
Jest, the roan, with eyes like chest-  
nuts;  
Jessie, leisurely advancing;  
Janice, June and Judith's Baby,  
All with heavy laden udders,  
Coming from the lucious pasture,  
Where the fragrance of the clover  
Tempts the honey bees to gather  
Nectar fit for any Eden.

Homeward from the checkered corn  
fields,  
Come the horses, heavy footed—  
Tired and sweaty—to the stable.  
Long the day has been and arduous,  
Weeds have perished by the million,  
And the corn is stretching upward  
Toward the sun for his warm kisses—  
God and man in combination  
Daily working miracles.

Hear the Quaker-vestured catbird  
Pouring forth his evening ditty  
From the untrimm'd roadside hedge-  
row,  
Like a trained, accomplished singer,  
While his little wife is listening  
From her hidden habitation,  
Where she guards five helpless nest-  
lings—  
Holding care a sacred duty.

See the tireless chimney swallows,  
Sailing low in search of insects—  
Swiftly skim the very treetops!  
Thus it is life pays the forfeit,  
“Feed the fittest,” says Dame Nature,  
“And preserve the rightful balance.”  
Carrying out the fatal mandate,  
Pestering flies and speared mosquitoes  
Are converted into feathers,  
Glossy feathers, full of twitter.

Come up Judy, leave the clover,  
Leave the scented mellilotus.  
Bees are flying slowly homeward,  
Flying homeward, honey laden;  
Come, my gentle, large-eyed Josie,  
Come and yield your creamy surplus.  
O, the wealth of clover pastures,  
That produce both milk and honey,  
Type of plenty that was promised  
In the fertile land of Canaan!

Hushed the sounds of rural labor;  
John comes in to see the skimming  
And the shapely arms of Mary  
As she deftly plies the skimmer.  
Sweeter is her smile than clover,  
Sweeter voice has she than catbird's  
Singing in the roadside hedges,  
Gentler are her ways than Judith's—  
Queen of all the gentle Shorthorns,  
Swifter she in loving service  
Than the glossy chimney swallow  
Darting after speared mosquitoes,  
And her welcome home is stronger  
Than the daily calls of hunger.



## The Wabbly Calf

To our red barn there came last night  
The cutest thing I ever saw,  
I wish you could have seen the sight,  
A baby calf hid in the straw.

The mama cow said "Mo-o"  
When we went out to see her baby,  
She was afraid we wanted to  
Take it away and keep it, maybe.

And then it tried to run about  
As if to show us it was spry,  
Its legs, though wabbled in and out  
Like willow canes before they're dry.

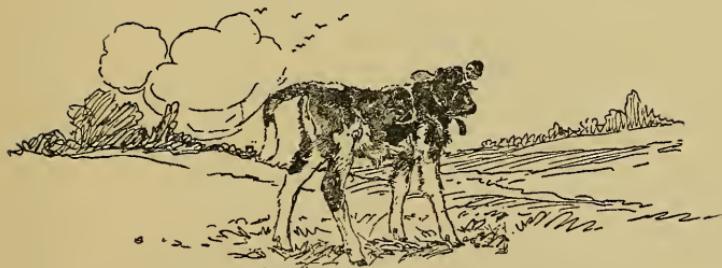
My papa said some men he knew  
Were just as wabbly as that calf,  
I don't know what he meant, do you?  
But mama did—it made her laugh.

To think that anything so young  
Can walk at all's what stumps me so,  
For baby Grace can't race among  
The rest of us, and she's most two.

And mama says that wabbly calf  
Will be a cow and give us cream  
In 'bout two birthdays and a half—  
How very odd it all does seem!

For I'll be then a little girl  
A-learning how to read and spell,  
Not half as big as sister Pearl,  
And bossy giving milk to sell!

I guess when I'm as tall as Ma  
The wabbly calf will be real old.  
And 'fore I know as much as Pa  
I'm 'fraid the darling will be sold.





### Mrs. Kitty Cottontail

Out in the orchard, close by an old tree  
Lived a shy little mother with her babies three;  
In a bed of dry grasses and soft, brown leaves  
She hid them away from the boys—  
little thieves  
Who would rob Mrs. Kitty  
Of her babies so pretty  
And carry them home for their sisters  
to see.

They grew every day, those wee babies three  
Hid under the roots of that old apple tree,  
And soon they were playing and running alone,  
And nibbling the clover the farmer had sown.  
But not far from home  
Did they dare to roam,  
For bad boys and dogs were the dread  
of the three.

Mrs. Cottontail wears a handsome grey suit—  
Warm in winter, cool when summer yields her fruit—  
So like the grey leaves of the woods in the fall  
That she'd be unnoticed except for the ball  
Of conspicuous white

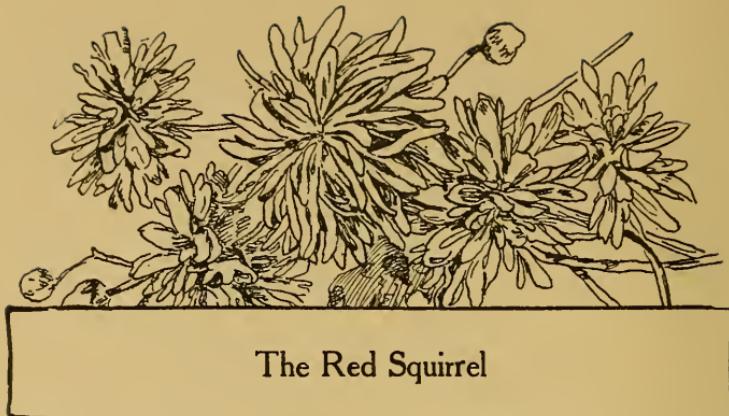
She has always in sight—  
A brief invitation to gunners to shoot.

One winter the ground was all covered  
with snow,  
And tracks in the orchard were found  
looking so (:-) —  
A colon ahead and a period behind—  
A thumb and two fingers will call it to  
mind.

Mrs. Kitty was out  
For a lark, without doubt,—  
Three tracks with four feet, a trick  
they all know.

I once knew a boy who tried to do  
right,  
But he set a steel trap for a rabbit  
one night,  
Next morning a poor, little, innocent  
thing  
With broken hind legs as limp as a  
string  
Was struggling and bleeding,  
Her frightened eyes pleading,  
And for weeks he saw them when his  
were shut tight.





## The Red Squirrel

There's a little red squirrel I see every day

In the trees by our house.

He's the liveliest thing in the world I should say,

And he jerks his long tail in the funniest way—

And he's sleek as a mouse!

In the fall he is busy as busy can be  
Gathering acorns to keep,

And if he cannot find a decayed hollow tree

Where the roof doesn't leak and the boys cannot see,

Builds a nest for his heap.

A great basket of leaves in a tree up so high

Makes one dizzy to look,

There he sleeps in a bed that is both warm and dry

When the weather is cold, and the snow fills the sky—

With no breakfast to cook.

Now he grabs a black walnut between  
his two paws,  
And he twirls it around  
Till he finds where the shell is the  
thinnest, then gnaws  
A smooth hole just as tho' the most  
perfect of saws  
The young rascal had found.

But I wonder who taught little bunny  
to store  
The ripe nuts for his lunch?  
How does he know that winter is com-  
ing for sure,  
When he never saw snow or cold  
weather before,  
Nor ripe acorns to munch? .





## The Hunted

Hello, Mister mule-eared Rabbit,  
Whither going friend, on the run?  
Do you leap so just from habit,  
Or, think you, I have a gun?  
Brother Rabbit, wait a minute,  
If a race you want, I'm in it.

Let's run off into the bushes  
Where the catbird pipes his song,  
Where the grosbeaks and the thrushes  
Trill like madcaps all day long.  
They'll not be afraid of me  
If I'm in your company.

Who can tell how many lessons  
In the awful school of blood  
It requires to leave impressions  
With our neighbors of the wood?  
Eyes and ears and quivering frame  
Speak for bunny to our shame.

But, my timid, hunted brother,  
You are not the only game,  
Men are shooting at each other,  
Pouncing on the weak and lame.  
Everybody's studying war,  
Peasant, priest and emperor.

Business, politics, society—  
All have loaded guns about;  
Even from the Mount of Piety  
Comes full many a crack and shout.  
Brother Rabbit, you're but one  
'Mong the hosts that die—or run.



## The Brindle Cat

"Me-ow! me-ow!" the brindle cat  
Is calling at the door,  
"I've had enough," she says, "of rat,  
And now want something more;  
A little milk, if it's about,  
To take the rat taste out."

The brindle cat says naught but "me-  
ow"—

The only word she knows—  
A word that seems to tell somehow  
All her delights and woes.

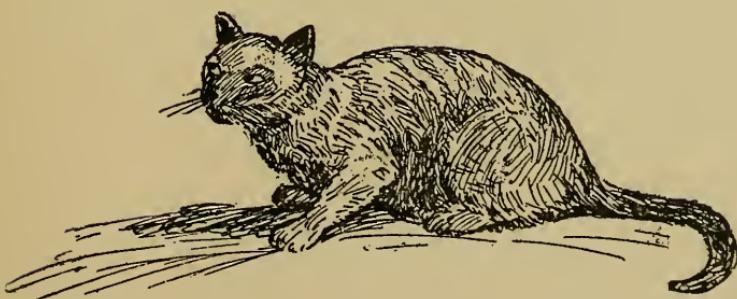
(All words are empty sounds unless  
Some feeling gives them stress.)

The brindle cat is cousin to  
The screechowl, I believe.

Sometimes she cries the whole night  
through

And dodges all we heave,  
And this one word makes all the row—  
Me-ow! me-ow! me-ow!

But when she's lying on the rug  
Contented as can be,  
She sleeps and snores without a drug  
Or any soothing tea,  
And if one gently strokes her now  
She'll softly answer, "me-ow."





## Blind Kittens

We found one day  
Out in the hay  
Four kittens with their eyes  
Shut tight,  
Although 'twas light  
And long, long past sunrise.

I said, "Grand'pa, they're fast asleep,  
An' I will go tiptoe, an' keep  
Real still,  
Lest they awake  
An' cry an' make  
Their mamma ill."

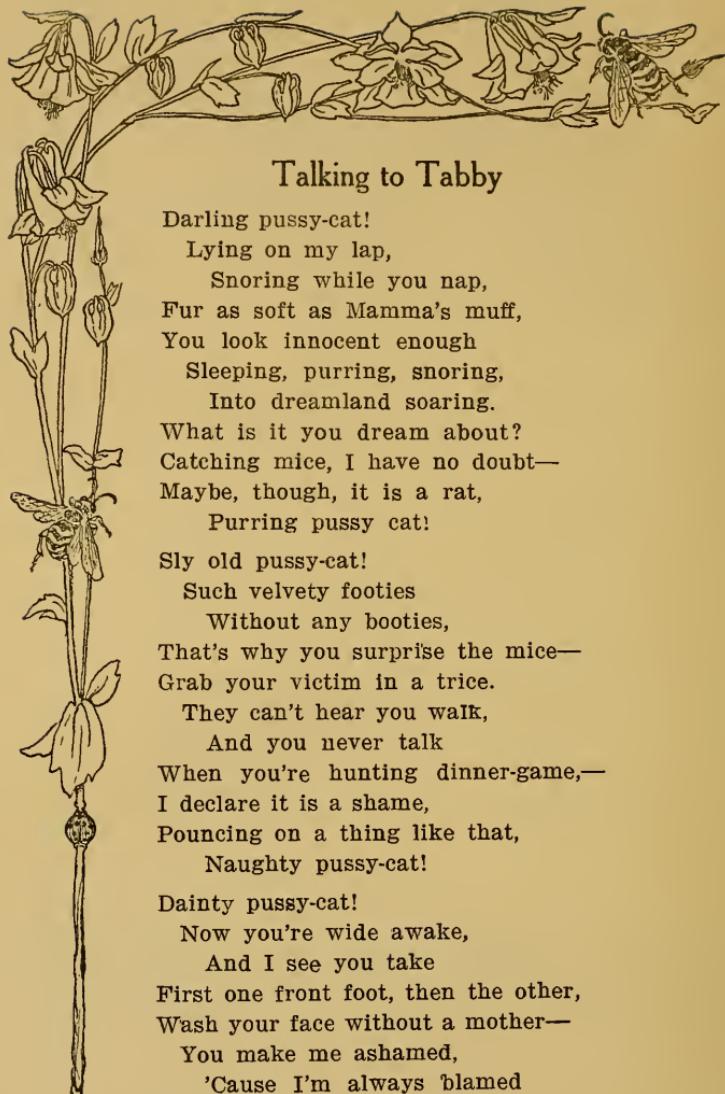
But grand'pa, he is wise.  
He said young kittens' eyes  
Stay shut all day;  
An' when I asked the reason why,  
He said it was God's way  
To make 'em sharp bye 'n bye.  
An' then he thought some more 'an  
    said  
That kittens when they're cats

Always see straight, an' that's  
A thing in which they are ahead  
Of us, he said, because we don't  
See things we ought to—or we won't,  
An' then we often blindly miss  
The path to happiness.

My gran'pa knows a lot  
That's awful hard for me,  
But when I'm big as like as not  
I'll be as wise as he.

One, two, three, four—  
To each I pointed  
Till they were counted  
And laid out on the floor.  
One looked like dirty coal,  
One white, all but it's tail,  
Two spotted—and all frail—  
That makes my kitten roll.  
My brother calls them scrubs,  
But I don't care,  
They're just as nice as Teddy cubs,  
So there!





## Talking to Tabby

Darling pussy-cat!  
    Lying on my lap,  
        Snoring while you nap,  
    Fur as soft as Mamma's muff,  
    You look innocent enough  
        Sleeping, purring, snoring,  
            Into dreamland soaring.  
    What is it you dream about?  
    Catching mice, I have no doubt—  
    Maybe, though, it is a rat,  
        Purring pussy cat!

Sly old pussy-cat!  
    Such velvety footies  
        Without any booties,  
    That's why you surprise the mice—  
    Grab your victim in a trice.  
        They can't hear you walk,  
            And you never talk  
    When you're hunting dinner-game,—  
    I declare it is a shame,  
    Pouncing on a thing like that,  
        Naughty pussy-cat!

Dainty pussy-cat!  
    Now you're wide awake,  
        And I see you take  
    First one front foot, then the other,  
    Wash your face without a mother—  
        You make me ashamed,  
            'Cause I'm always blamed  
    When I fail to wash my face,  
    An' smooth my hair into its place—  
    You've no one to tell you that,  
        Clean-faced pussy-cat!



O, you pussy-cat!  
How you ever see  
Is what puzzles me,  
Th' little crack in your eye  
May be all right when you lie  
All cuddled up snug  
On a soft, warm rug,  
But if you were hunting dinner  
And set out to be a winner,  
You'd need better eyes than that,  
I think, pussy-cat.

Wicked pussy-cat!  
One thing I don't like,  
You have claws to strike,  
Underneath those velvet toes,  
Sharp as briars beneath a rose.

I'd rather not feel  
Such hooks, like cold steel.  
It's lucky I'm not a mouse  
Living with you in the house,  
My heart would go pit-a-pat,  
Wicked pussy-cat!

Come, poor pussy-cat!  
Now I come to think,  
Don't you need some milk to  
drink?

You do the best that you know,—  
Wonder if we all do so?

It's easy enough  
To scold and be rough,  
Find a lot of fault with you  
When we've better things to do,—  
You do what God set you at,  
Pa says, pussy-cat!



## A Little Brown Toad

Hippety-hop, little toad,  
Why do you stop in the road?  
Waiting for me to talk with?  
Four little feet to walk with,  
Four little legs to race with,  
Enough to run any place with.  
Why do you sit on the ground  
While I am skipping around,  
Happy with only two feet?  
And I can easily beat  
    You with your four, little toad.  
What makes you blink, little toad?  
    Sunshine too bright in the road?  
You'd rather sit in the shade  
Maybe, where eyes never fade.  
Couldn't catch flies in the light,  
Could you, were the sun very bright?  
    What do you think, little toad?  
You have no teeth, little toad,  
Can't bite me hard, if you would.  
How do you manage your food?  
Mamma tells me it's not good,  
Eating things whole as you do.  
But, if 'twere worms, I'd want to,  
    Indeed I would, little toad.

Since you can't bite, little toad,  
Good thing for you your warts growed;  
No one likes them very well;  
Dogs, even, drop you and yell,  
Just as they would if you bit,  
So you are safe when you sit  
Under a leaf to get rest,  
So I am sure warts are best—

Yes, best for you, little toad.

How many toes, little toad?  
Shouldn't have guessed, but you  
showed

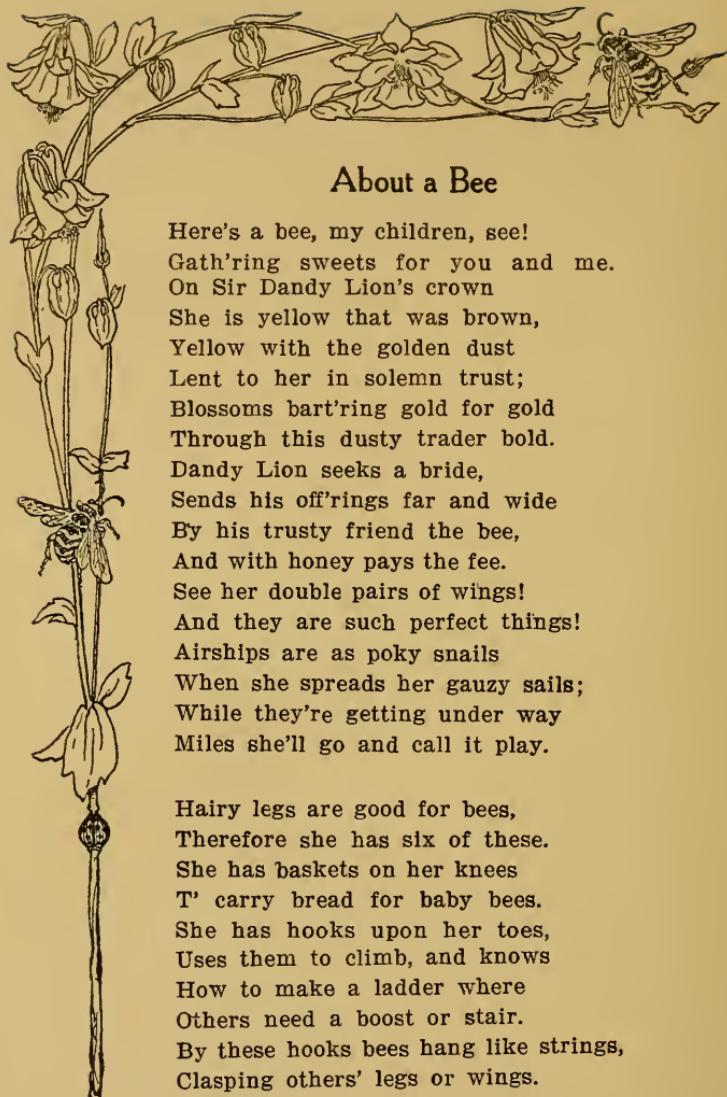
Eight toes in front, ten behind.  
Thanks for the sight. You are kind.  
Why more behind than in front?  
Hind legs must suffer the brunt  
When there's hard toad work to do,  
So I've been told; is it true?  
Hope toads never sucked the thumb,  
Stunting it till it didn't come—

Hope that isn't so, little toad.

Where did you stay, little toad,  
When it was cold and it snowed?  
Under some leaves, so I heard,  
Slept till the song of a bird  
Told you 'twas time to come out  
And see what folks were about.  
When you have found the right spot,  
Nearby in our garden plot,  
Hide every worm, every bug,  
Inside your little brown jug—

Pa says you will, little toad.





## About a Bee

Here's a bee, my children, see!  
Gath'ring sweets for you and me.  
On Sir Dandy Lion's crown  
She is yellow that was brown,  
Yellow with the golden dust  
Lent to her in solemn trust;  
Blossoms bart'ring gold for gold  
Through this dusty trader bold.  
Dandy Lion seeks a bride,  
Sends his off'rings far and wide  
By his trusty friend the bee,  
And with honey pays the fee.  
See her double pairs of wings!  
And they are such perfect things!  
Airships are as poky snails  
When she spreads her gauzy sails;  
While they're getting under way  
Miles she'll go and call it play.

Hairy legs are good for bees,  
Therefore she has six of these.  
She has baskets on her knees  
T' carry bread for baby bees.  
She has hooks upon her toes,  
Uses them to climb, and knows  
How to make a ladder where  
Others need a boost or stair.  
By these hooks bees hang like strings,  
Clasping others' legs or wings.

See her suck the honey up  
From Sir Dandy Lion's cup!

Could you see her hollow tongue  
You'd imagine she is young,  
Sucking "lemo" through a straw—  
"Finest drink you ever saw?"  
Yes, but hers is ready made,  
And beats any lemonade,—  
Sugar'd just to suit her taste,  
Is it strange that she makes haste?  
She'll go home and tell the rest  
That she's Dandy Lion's guest,  
That he fills the golden cup  
Ev'ry time she drinks it up.  
If you had a tongue like that  
Wouldn't you throw up your hat?

Notice those two prongs in front,  
They're put there so she won't bunt  
'Gainst her ma some moonless night  
When the stars are out of sight,  
She just *feels* her way along  
Through the dark, and midst the  
    throng.

Feelers take the place of hands,  
When she meets her dearest friends  
Reaches out as if to say  
"Howdy do! art well today?"  
Some wise men think they're her ears,  
(*Feels* the sound instead of hears).  
These same wise men say she smells  
All the fragrant lily bells,  
All the clover-fields in bloom,  
And the linden's choice perfume  
Through these horn-like antennae—  
Useful, aren't they, to the bee?

But, you say, she has a sting  
That is not a pleasant thing.  
Yes, but roses, too, have briars,  
And too many fond desires  
Have a stinger at the end.  
Sometimes *we*, too, sting a friend.  
Shall we then demand of her  
All the virtues when *we* err?  
Stingers are for self defense  
'Gainst attempts of violence.  
We, too, may defend our homes  
'Gainst whatever evil comes.  
She, like us, will sometimes use it,  
Sometimes in her heat abuse it,  
Never saying "Please excuse it,"  
But *she* seldom fails to lose it,  
We may sting and sting again  
Tho' our friends are dead with pain.  
Stingers, children, are all right  
When they don't appear in sight.





## The Big Red Apple

An apple hung upon a limb,  
A big, red apple, round and trim,  
The stem that held it was so slim  
I wondered why it didn't fall.

What made the apple blush so red?  
Why wasn't it white or green instead?  
Did Mr. Sun shine on its head  
When it had lost its parasol?

Perhaps it wants to go and see  
Some clever folks like you and me.  
It's tired, maybe, of this old tree,  
And dresses ready for a ride.

For all the people that I know  
Will pick the red ones when they go  
To visit friends; they want to show  
The big red apples far and wide.





### When the Bees are Coming Home

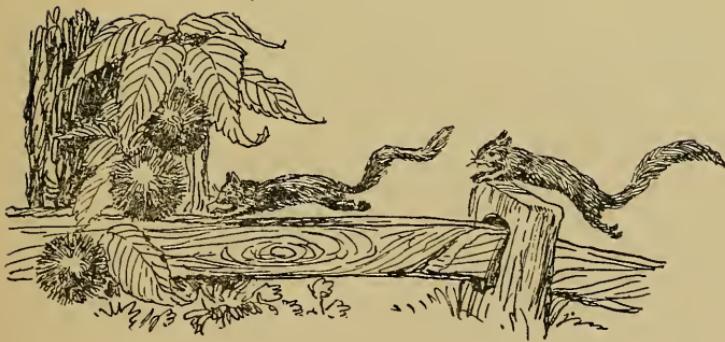
'Tis evening: Day has folded its tired  
wings  
To rest, fann'd by the scented southern  
breeze;  
And homeward fly the prudent honey-  
bees  
To join their happy sisters 'neath the  
trees,  
Content if some sweet gain their la-  
bor brings.

The fragrant grass is cushion'd seat  
for me,  
And in my lap the head of soft brown  
hair  
That once my heart entangled, lying  
there—  
More youthful then, but not more  
dearly fair—  
And sweet her lips as nectar sipt by  
bee.

“What fools we mortals be!” We fume  
and fret

Because of life's unceasing round of  
    toil,  
Permitting gold our happiness to spoil,  
When love and service are the holy oil  
That blesses all the wealth we need  
    to get.

The soft, low hum that falls upon our  
    ears  
As darkness creeps upon the glowing  
    west,  
Is labor's song proclaiming that the  
    best  
Of all that's good is found through  
    daily quest—  
And duty leaves no time for useless  
    tears.



## To a Katydid



Touch your lute-strings, Katydid,  
Silent sits your love a-listening,  
But she cannot play or sing,  
Neither lute has she nor string,  
So she makes believe she's hid,  
Serenader Katydid.

Don't you get a little tired?  
But, perhaps she lifts a blind,  
Slyly peeping from behind—  
Telling you that she *does* mind—  
Makes you think that you're inspired,  
Then you never dream you're tired.

Why's your frock coat always green?  
Ah, I think that I can guess,  
Colored like the leaves your dress  
Will be noticed, maybe, less;  
Then while you are all unseen  
Tune your lute-strings for the e'en.

Lovers always love the night,  
Darkness makes the lover bold,  
Lovers meet when the day is old

And turn the moonbeams into gold.  
Neighbor Katydid, you're right,  
Other lovers love the night.

Other lovers, too, are mute  
Just like you when courting's done—  
Sweeter words when love's begun  
Than when love is surely won.  
A few brief nights you press your suit,  
Then you put away your lute.

Neighbor Katydid, *we* play  
Making love a little longer,  
We're a little larger, stronger;  
You may die a little younger,  
We but stay our little day,  
Then *we're* housed in friendly clay.





### When Strawberries are Ripe

The morning's as fresh as a dew-span-gled rose,  
O come where the strawberries grow;  
Come, drink of the wine which is  
poured out for those  
Who witness the first ruddy glow  
Far in the east:—  
Come, then and feast—  
The garden is red with the best fruit  
that grows.

When strawberries ripen, how green  
are the trees!  
What odors the clover sends forth!  
How swift to the hives fly the sweet-laden bees!  
How fragrant the sensuous earth!  
Come, ere it's late,  
The strawberries wait  
Your loving embrace, as you fall on  
your knees.

When strawberries ripen, and young  
lips are red  
As the sunrise that tinges the east,  
Come early, my Love, to the strawberry bed  
Where beauty invites to the feast.  
Ripe strawberries,  
Like lovers' kisses,  
Are lurious when plucked ere the  
morning be fled.

The robin is calling her young to the  
spot,  
And scolds us for bothering her so;  
She fears not our presence, for never  
a shot  
Has echoed to scare her, altho'  
She claims some toll—  
Please don't say she stole  
Because she takes pay for the songs  
you've forgot.

A month has gone by since, both morn-  
ing and eve.  
Her mate has regaled us with song;  
At peep o' the day and until the night,  
we've  
Been cheered by his notes; and among  
The garden rows  
Where lurk our foes,  
How many fat worms he's assisted to  
leave!

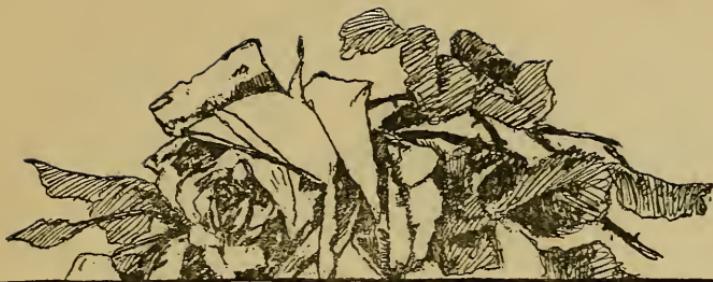
The cat-bird and grosbeak, the brown-  
thrus and jay,  
(Every eve, in strawberry time)  
All coax, in full chorus, the swift fly-  
ing day  
To tarry and list to their chime.  
O, blessed songs  
Of the feathered throngs  
That lure anxious hearts from all  
worry away!

When Bossie is milked and the full-  
brimming pail

Suggests some nice cream for the mor-  
row,  
We'll heap the pan high with ripe ber-  
ries, and mail  
A note to some friends in the borough  
To be our guests  
When the purpling west's  
Aglow with Sol's fire—and they'll  
come without fail!

When strawberries ripen, the warm  
changeful skies—  
Now smiling, now weeping by turns—  
Remind one of woman, whose win-  
someness lies  
In tears or in fervor that burns,  
But changeful days,  
Nor her moodful ways,  
Can lessen the charms of my Love's  
bonny eyes.





### An Anniversary Song

A flame is on the golden-rod,  
It lights up every lane,  
A joy is in my heart again—  
And both are gifts of God.  
The golden-rod was bright that day  
When we as lovers plighted—  
When we as lovers were united  
Beneath its golden spray.

Sunshine got tangled in the flower  
And lingers with it fain,  
And sunshine lights love's golden  
chain  
That binds us in our bower;  
And sunshine glints along the road  
Of life, with love along,  
And strains of golden-noted song  
Have blest our joint abode.

The golden-belted honey bee  
Brings golden harvest home  
To store in golden honeycomb—  
Her well-earned golden fee;  
So when the golden beauties nod,  
And love is sweet and true,  
I bless the Father for these two—  
For thee and golden-rod.



### A Summer Idyl

I hear a rustle in the corn  
Along the checkered rows,  
And every day new-born  
I mutter "How it grows!"  
I hear a whisper,—listen!  
Leaf unto stalk, says, "Hasten!  
Don't dally in the sun,  
You have a lot of work to do  
Before the summer's done,  
And I'll help, too."

The leaves in chorus say:  
"Oh hang your dusty banners out,  
Ye stalks, where breezes play  
At match-making each day  
Till wedding bells ring out."  
The silken ears, too, hear the shout  
And long to give the bride away.

I hear of plans the corn is making—  
A whispered scheme to see  
The world outside, forsaking  
The pent-up field for liberty.  
Each ear is planning to put on  
Its richest colored suit,  
To ride the briny seas upon.  
And the kings of earth salute.

I hear the gossip of the corn,  
It claims its kin is royal-born,  
And when it travels far  
By ship or car,

It goes to meet the high-born sons  
Of other lands, where skies  
Are kind, but Maize pines and dies—  
As pines the maid whom faithless lov-  
er shuns.

The Shorthorn steer just shakes his  
sides  
A-listening to the talk,  
For well he knows that if it rides  
He doesn't need to walk.  
And if to merry England goes  
A cargo from the checkered rows,  
He'll carry to his native shore,  
In juicy sirloins, bushels more.

The Poland China smiles  
To hear the corn a-whispering,  
And he begins to sing—  
For thought of eating oft beguiles  
The greedy into smiles.  
But all the virgins in the patch  
Are anxious to be wed,  
And gossip long about the catch,  
And each prospective match,  
As if no one were listening,  
But I heard what was said.





### An Apple Seed

K.L.E

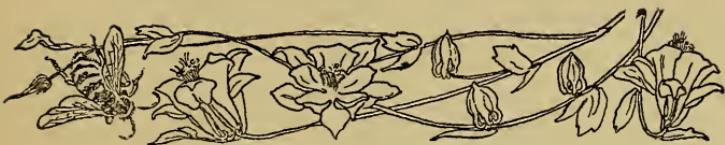
This small brown Sphinx  
Which I hold in my hand,  
It came from out the orchard's best;  
A little child may eat and crush  
The splendid miracle that links  
It to a purpose planned,  
Or, I may gently push  
It 'neath the soft, warm mould and  
test  
Its worth with little toil  
In God's alembic, genial soil.

Who knows but in this tiny shell  
Lies, sleeping, some creation new  
That's destined to outlast  
The monuments upreared to tell  
Where Mammon moulders 'neath the  
dew  
When titled wealth has passed?  
No marvel on this big, round earth  
Is greater than its birth.

Could I but read  
The mighty secrets locked  
In one brown seed  
I think I'd know the Power that  
rocked  
The cradle of the world when young;  
I'd know the thoughts of God  
As angels know, who long have trod  
The heavenly hills among.

This curious elf leads fancy out  
To scented orchards pink with bloom,

To wild birds' nesting-ways,  
Where childhood's gleeful shout  
Speaks joy that's woven in the loom  
Of hope, whose cheerful shuttle plays  
In hearts on life's spring days.





## The Little Preacher

If I could talk  
In such an earnest way  
As our old kitchen clock—  
And make the people hear  
At all times of the year—  
I think I'd be a preacher.  
It stands up straight, and I hear it say  
To every human creature:

“I never waste  
A minute in a day,  
And yet I never haste,  
But tick and tick away  
Until they mind my rule.  
I tell them when to go to bed  
And when to rise  
If they'd be wise.

I tell the kitchen maid  
Just when to ring the bell  
For breakfast, and I tell  
The children not to be too late,  
For if they are as sure as fate  
They'll lose their grade at school.

“I tell folks when to take the train  
To go abroad and home again.  
The dinner's called  
At my command.  
All seem to understand

My tick-tack talk  
And fingers pointing at some present  
duty  
In my old-fashioned way.  
They dare not balk.  
Looking square in my face each day,  
Altho' it is no beauty.  
And I am getting old."

The old clock says: "Keep doing,  
Don't stop, but keep pursuing.  
The trees don't grow full size  
In one short day before your eyes.  
But day and night they keep a-grow-  
ing.  
A little work done every minute  
Grows like a cake with soda in it."

If I could talk  
Like that old clock  
I, too, would be a preacher  
And lecture every thinking creature.





## Jack Frost

You sly old chap,  
I wonder where you stay  
When summer's on the hill and plain,  
And the golden sun makes golden  
grain!  
Then, where's your home, I pray?  
Where do you nap?

I think I know,  
You spend the summer where  
The iceberg comes from, and the seal  
Grows fur for ladies' necks genteel,  
Where lives the polar bear  
And Eskimo.

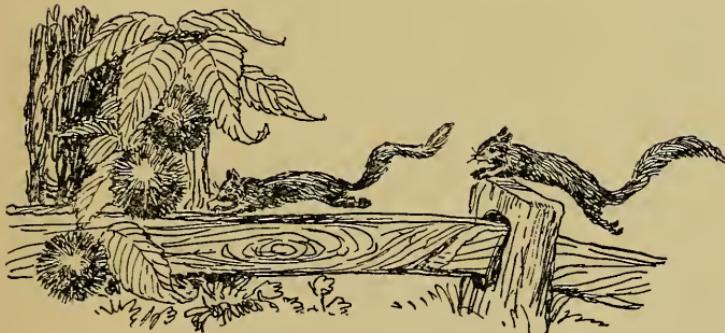
Your trusty steed,  
The ready, swift Northwind  
Is mounted when you travel south,  
An ice cream breath comes from your  
mouth,  
You leave white tracks behind  
As south you speed.

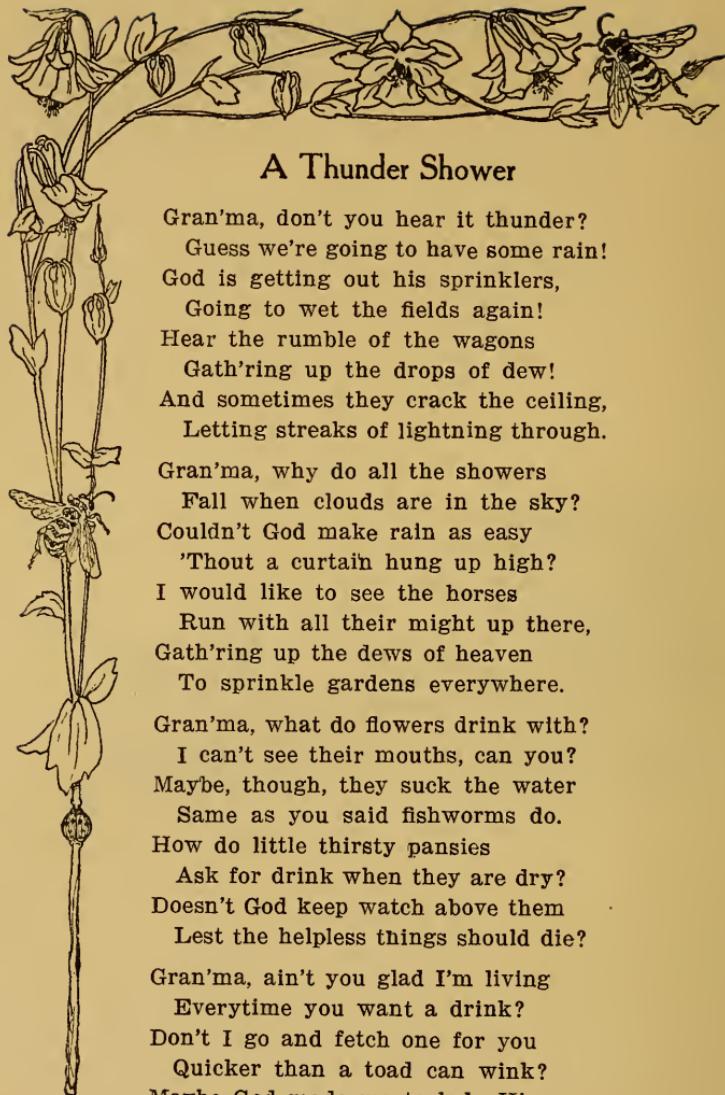
You stopt one night  
To draw some pictures on  
Our kitchen windows that were fine,  
You drew a Norway spruce and pine  
Like those upon our lawn—  
All done in white.

You bridged the lake  
With crystal fields of ice

In time for Christmas holidays,  
And schoolboys voted you loud praise  
For making things so nice  
Just for their sake.

I hardly know  
Which time I like the best,  
The winter, with its ice and snow,  
Or summer when to the woods I go  
And picnic with the rest,—  
I hardly know.





## A Thunder Shower

Gran'ma, don't you hear it thunder?  
Guess we're going to have some rain!  
God is getting out his sprinklers,  
Going to wet the fields again!  
Hear the rumble of the wagons  
Gath'ring up the drops of dew!  
And sometimes they crack the ceiling,  
Letting streaks of lightning through.

Gran'ma, why do all the showers  
Fall when clouds are in the sky?  
Couldn't God make rain as easy  
'Thout a curtain hung up high?  
I would like to see the horses  
Run with all their might up there,  
Gath'ring up the dews of heaven  
To sprinkle gardens everywhere.

Gran'ma, what do flowers drink with?  
I can't see their mouths, can you?  
Maybe, though, they suck the water  
    Same as you said fishworms do.  
How do little thirsty pansies  
    Ask for drink when they are dry?  
Doesn't God keep watch above them  
    Lest the helpless things should die?

Gran'ma, ain't you glad I'm living  
Everytime you want a drink?  
Don't I go and fetch one for you  
Quicker than a toad can wink?  
Maybe God made me to help Him  
Do a lot of little things,  
Just as dew-drops cheer the pansies  
And small rain-drops feed the  
springs.



## Goldenrod

When the northern autumn's near  
And the hazy atmosphere  
Mellows with the orchard fruit,  
And the cricket plays his lute,  
By the roadside, beckoning, nod  
Stalks of queenly goldenrod.

Bob-o-links that nest in June,  
Making love in merry tune,  
All have put their music by,  
Now their note is but a cry,  
But the tasseled goldenrod  
Waves its plumes and praises God.

All the gladness of the spring  
Voiced in all the birds that sing,  
All of summer's sunny days,  
Harvest-time with yellow sprays—  
All with golden sandals shod  
Bringing gifts for goldenrod.

Thus are Heaven's richest gifts  
Saved for those who wait, and rifts  
Radiant with the sun of hope  
Light and cheer life's western slope—  
As the autumn goldenrod  
Crowns the year—a gift from God.





### Goldenrods and Asters

I like the hardy crocus  
That smiles on April mornings  
While here and there a snowbank  
    Wets with its tears the mold.

I like the daring scillas  
That steal the blue of heaven,  
And, spite of chilly weather,  
    Their azure flags unfold.

I like the dandelion  
That flaunts her yellow banners  
When skies are bright with promise  
    That fair will be the day.

I like the single tulips  
Whose waxen doors fly open  
Inviting bees to banquet  
    In hopeful, sunny May.

But these are like some people  
That only smile in sunshine,  
And when comes cloudy weather,  
    Or sudden pall of night,  
They pull their wraps about them,  
They curtain every window

And shut the doors to visitants  
They loved when days were bright.

But goldenrods and asters  
That flame on every hillside  
And nod in every valley  
Are open night and day.  
They're like true friends that never  
Shut up their hearts, or waver  
When sudden dark disaster  
O'ertakes us on our way.





### Blackeyed Susan

I know a stately prairie lass  
That nods a greeting when I pass  
    A-near her meadow home;  
But such a maid of th' sun is she,  
She only beckons unto me  
    When harvest days are come.

Full many a month I pass her place  
And never see the winsome face  
    That tempts me to alight;  
But when the fervor of July  
Reveals the miss to passer-by,  
    She captivates me quite.

Bright yellow ribbons, worn with  
    grace,  
Increase the beauty of her face  
    Smiling among the green.  
I press her to my heart and say  
"I've watched for thee for many a day,  
    My black-eyed Prairie Queen."



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